Keeping You in the Know
U.S. Department of Energy
Environmental Management Recovery Act
NEWS FLASH
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Recovery Act Funds Accelerate Moab Mill Tailings Disposal

1.5 Million Tons Removed

Uranium Mill Tailings Disposal

Train shipment of uranium mill tailings

The Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project received $108 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. To date, 1.5 million tons of uranium mill tailings has been removed from the Moab site in Utah away from the Colorado River to a DOE-constructed, NRC-accepted disposal facility near Crescent Junction, Utah. Recovery Act has funded the removal of approximately 830,000 tons of the uranium mill tailings and will fund the removal of an additional 1.2 million tons between now and September 30, 2011. More than 200 workers have been hired under the Recovery Act.

Because DOE chose to ship the mill tailings by rail instead of trucking them on U.S. Highway 191, the project has saved an estimated 300,000 gallons of diesel fuel in the first year of shipping. This 37.5 percent fuel savings is based on a comparison of ton-miles per gallon shipped by truck versus rail that was published by the Texas Transportation Institute in March 2009.

> "When we look back over the past year, we can show the taxpayer that we've accomplished a significant amount so far with the ARRA funding we've received."
>
> *Donald Metzler,*
> *Moab Federal Project Director*

American-made gantry crane

Other Benefits of Recovery Act Funding at Moab

Recovery Act has funded the purchase of additional equipment, including a second American-made gantry crane to facilitate increasing the efficiency of loading and unloading tailings containers from the railcars. The second crane allows operations to continue if one crane is down for maintenance or repairs. With both cranes in operation, the overall time to load a train for shipment is reduced by a third.

Container wash facility

Each container is now driven through a wash facility that was installed using Recovery Act funding. The wash facility will substantially reduce the number of surveys for radioactivity that are required to ensure no loose contamination remains on the exterior of the containers before shipment.

More information regarding cleanup under the Moab UMTRA Project is available at www.gjem.energy.gov/moab.

Tailings container and railcar

Where Do Mill Tailings Come From?

Uranium ore was mined in significant quantities in the United States for more than 40 years. Initially, the ore was mined and milled by private companies for use in national defense programs. After the 1950s, uranium was also needed as fuel for nuclear power plants to produce electricity. Mill tailings are the sand-like material that remains after the ore is processed. When the processing operations at Moab ceased in 1984, an estimated 12 million cubic yards (16 million tons) of mill tailings and tailings-contaminated soil were present in a pile located in the western portion of the property.